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The Era of Lachhman Sen.—By H. BEVERIDGE, ESQ., C. S.

The object of this paper is to draw attention to the facts that the era of Lachhman Sen is mentioned by Abu-l-Fazl in the Akbarnáma, and that according to him it began in 1119 A. D.

The era has been discussed by more than one scholar, but it appears that its date, or even the event denoted by it, has not yet been positively ascertained.

According to Dr. Mitra the era began in 1106-7 and dates from the accession of Lachhman Sen I, the grandfather of the Lachhman who was dethroned by Bakhtiyár Khiljí. According to General Cunningham the era began with the death of Lachhman Sen I, and the first year of it is 1108 or 1109.

The first European scholar who mentions the date is, according to Cunningham, Colebrooke who alluded to it in 1796. Afterwards it was referred to by Mr. Prinsep in 1836. But none of these writers refer to the Akbarnáma. Apparently it was thought that the only mention of the chronology of Bengal was to be found in the *Aín-i-Akbarí*, that being the only work of Abu-l-Fazl which had been translated into English. There is indeed a reference to Abu-l-Fazl's mention of the Lachhman era in a note on the last page of Price's *History of the Muhammadans*, but the date given to it is wrong by a thousand years, and the era is wrongly called that of Lachhman Singh.

The way in which the era comes to be mentioned by Abu-l-Fazl is as follows: Akbar, as is well known, invented a new era which he called the *Taríkh Iláhí* or the Divine Era. It is usually stated that it began with his accession, but this is not quite correct. Akbar ascended the throne at Kalanor on 2 Rabíu-ş-şaní, 963 A. H., corresponding to

14th February 1556, old style. He made his *Taríkh Iláhí* begin with the first year of his reign, but he took for its commencement the period of the vernal equinox or the time when the sun enters. This Aries was the Nauroz of the Persians and the first day of their month of Farwardín. This Nauroz began on 10th March, old style, or 21st March, new style, and so the Divine Era began on 21st March 1556. But though it was made to begin then, the era was not invented or at least not promulgated till 992 A. H., corresponding to 1584 A. D. In that year a farmán or edict was issued by Akbar. This farmán was probably drafted by the eminent astronomer and philosopher, called Mír Fath 'Alí of Shiráz, for it was he who corrected the Tables of Ulagh Beg for the purpose of the new era. The farmán is given at pp. 10-13 of Vol. II of the Akbarnáma, Ed. Bibliotheca Indica. In it the other eras in use in the world are referred to, and at p. 12, 7 lines from top, we have the important words

در ولایت بنگ تاریخ از ابتدای حکومت لچهن سین
است - و ازان باز تا حال چهار صد و شصت و پنج سال شده است

“In the country of Bang (Bengal) dates are calculated from the beginning of the reign of Lachhman Sen. From that period till now there have been 465 years.”

Then the farmán goes on to mention the Sáliváhan and Vikramá-ditya eras, and states that 1506 years of the Sáliváhan, and 1641 of the Vikramá-ditya era have elapsed. If we deduct these periods, we get $1584 - 465 = 1119$ A. D. for the beginning of the Lachhman Sen era, $1584 - 1506 = 78$ A. D. for the beginning of the Sáliváhan era, and $1584 - 1641 = - 57$, *i. e.*, 57 B. C. for the beginning of the Vikramá-ditya era. These two last dates are right according to chronologists, so that we may place reliance on the Lachhman Sen one. But if Abu-l-Fazl is right, and it is likely that he is right, for the date is given in a solemn public document and at a time when the Lachhman Sen era was in use, Dr. Mitra and the almanac-makers of Tirhut are wrong about the beginning of the era; and General Cunningham is wrong both about the date and the event commemorated by the era.

According to Abu-l-Fazl the era began in 1119 A. D., *i. e.*, about twelve years after the date given by the Tirhut almanac-makers.

Possibly Abu-l-Fazl is wrong, and possibly too there is a misprint* in the Bibliotheca Indica edition, but there is a circumstance which seems to me to corroborate Abu-l-Fazl. This is that the *Ṭabaqát-i-Násirí* says that Lachhman had been on the throne for eighty years, when he was expelled by Bakhtiyár *Khiljí* (Raverty's translation of the *Ṭabaqát-i-Násirí*, p. 554).

* Major Price's MS., however, must have given also the figures 465.

Now Bakhtiyár Khiljí took Nadiyá apparently in 590 A. H. = 1194 A. D. (Raverty's translation, p. 559 note), or in 1195 A. D. according to General Cunningham. If then Lachhman began to reign in 1119 and reigned eighty years, this would bring the termination of his government to 1199 A. D., which is a tolerably close approximation to the dates of the capture of Nadiyá given by Raverty and Cunningham. If we take Mr. Blochmann's date for that event, *viz.*, 1198 or 1199 then there is an almost complete coincidence between Abu-l-Fazl's date of 1119 for the commencement of Lachhman Sen's reign and the statement in the *Ṭabaqát* of Minháj-u-d-dín that Lachhman reigned eighty years. That is, if the eighty years be taken to be calendar years. If, on the other hand, they are taken to be Muhammadan or lunar years, they will amount to somewhat less than seventy-eight calendar years. Major Raverty, in a note at p. 558 of his translation of the *Ṭabaqát*, quotes one Munshí Shám Parsád as saying in an account of Gaur that Rai Lachhman ruled from 510 to 590 A. H. Major Raverty adds that this is correct, but it can only be made to agree with the *Ṭabaqát* by reckoning the eighty years of the reign as lunar years; for 510—590 A. H. is equal to 1116—1195 or 1194 A. D.

General Cunningham's idea, that the Lachhman Sen era was established on the death of that prince, is opposed to the statement of Abu-l-Fazl, and also seems to be improbable. It is not common either in the East or West to begin an era with a death. Men generally date from a birth or from an accession to a throne. Akbar, it is true, ordered that the *Taríkh Alfí*, or history of a thousand years, should begin from the death of Muḥammad, but this was a freak of despotism, occasioned apparently by a superstitious aversion to the word Hijrah, which was ill-omened from its meaning "flight."

If, however, we adopt General Cunningham's view and also hold that the Lachhman Sen of the era is the father of Lakhmania, the last king of Bengal, then we find that the death of the father and the birth of the son occurred almost at the same time, and in this way Abu-l-Fazl's statement and General Cunningham's may be reconciled. Lakhmania, the last king of Bengal, was a posthumous son. When his father died, his mother was far advanced in her pregnancy, and the nobles put the crown on her womb and did homage to her and the unborn child. She had herself hung up head downwards for two hours, in order that the birth might be delayed till an auspicious moment. He was born, and the poor mother expired, and then the infant was laid on the throne.

It is in this way that he is said to have reigned eighty years. If this horrible story is true, we need not wonder at Lakhmania's misfortunes. He was emphatically one *cui non risere parentes*. Thus then

it may be almost equally correct, so far as the initial year is concerned, to say that the era began with the death of Lachhman Sen, as that it began with the birth of his son Lakhmania. I prefer, however, Abu-l-Fazl's statement that it began with the commencement of the reign of Lachhman Sen. Even if we take this Lachhman Sen to be the father of Lakhmania, and not Lakhmania himself, still Abu-l-Fazl's date may be correct. We do not know how long the father reigned and if, as Lassen conjectures, he was an usurper, his duration of power is likely to have been short. Abu-l-Fazl's omission to say that he ever reigned at least implies that he did not rule long. There would therefore be no difficulty in supposing that his reign began about 1119 A. D. Perhaps an argument in favour of the view, that the last king of Bengal or his father gave his name to the era, may be derived from the fact that one of them founded a new dynasty and a new capital. This was a circumstance likely to be marked by the introduction of a new era. Stewart in his *History of Bengal*, p. 42, describes Lachhman, the last king of Bengal, as succeeding his father Lachhman, but the authority whom he seems to have followed, *viz.*, the author of the *Ṭabaqát-i-Náṣirí*, does not mention the father's name. The Persian original will be found, quoted at p. 135 of our *Journal*, Part I for 1865, in Dr. Mitra's paper on the *Sena Rájás*.

Abu-l-Fazl in his *Áín*, p. 414, mentions Lakhman (qu. Lachhman ?) as the father of Lakhmania, but he does not describe him as having ever reigned. In his list at p. 413, Rájá Nojah is the last king of Bengal. He is the last of the sixty-one kings who, according to him, ruled Bengal for 4544 years. Nojah reigned three years, and then, says Abu-l-Fazl, the country came under the dominion of Dehlí.

It is curious that he should say nothing here of Lakhmania, and that in the very next page he should tell us that he succeeded Rájá Nojah. Three suggestions may be made to reconcile the discrepancy, though none of them is quite satisfactory.

1st. The list, at p. 413, may be that of a particular family and so not include Lakhmania, who at all events was not a direct descendant of Nojah. Possibly he was not even a Kayasth.

2nd. The list may be that of the kings of Gaur or Lakhnautí and so not include Lakhmania who had his capital at Nadiyá.

3rd. Lakhmania may not be included, because his reign did not come to a natural end, but was violently interrupted by Bakhtiyár Khiljí.

Though the *Ṭabaqát-i-Náṣirí* does not mention the father's name, it represents the father as having reigned, and possibly Stewart combined the statements of Abu-l-Fazl and the *Ṭabaqát*.

The *Ṭabaqát* is the better authority of the two probably, and so

putting it and Abu-l-Fazl's statement together, we may take it that Lachhman the father of Lakhmania ruled Bengal.

Dr. Mitra, in the paper already quoted, describes Abu-l-Fazl as saying that Lachhman ascended the throne in 1116 and reigned eight years. But I have not been able to find either of these statements in Abu-l-Fazl. Apparently the Lachhman to whom Dr. Mitra refers is the Lakhan Sen who succeeded Balál Sen. But Abu-l-Fazl makes him reign only seven years. I submit too that clearly this Lakhan Sen or Lachhman Sen has nothing to do with the era we are considering. He succeeded Balál Sen the builder of the Fort of Gaur, and was in his turn succeeded by Mádhava Sen who, according to Abu-l-Fazl, reigned ten years. Then came Kesava Sen who reigned fifteen years, then Suda Sen (no doubt the Sura Sen of the Rájávalí, quoted by Dr. Mitra at p. 134 of his paper) who reigned eighteen years, and finally Nojah who reigned three years. Thus we have from Lachhman Sen or Lakhan Sen, the son of Balál, to Lakhmania, the son of Lachhman, a period of forty-six years. Four princes too intervened, so that Lakhmania can hardly have been the grandson of Lakhan the son of Balál. As Lakhmania reigned eighty years, his accession must date from 1114 or 1119, according as we take 1194 or 1199 as the date of the capture of Nadiyá. If then the Lakhmania era took its rise with Lakhan Sen, the son of Balál, its first year would be in 1068 or 1073 A. D., if we count from his death, and in 1061 or 1066, if we count from the beginning of his reign. Such dates, however, would be contrary to all the authorities. I venture, therefore, to think that the view of Dr. Mitra and of General Cunningham that the Lachhman Sen who gave his name to the era was the son of Balál Sen, is one which cannot be sustained.

In connection with this part of my subject I wish to caution my readers against accepting the lists of kings of Bengal given in Gladwin's translation as a correct rendering of the lists of Abu-l-Fazl. A reference to the original will show that Gladwin's translation is not quite accurate.

The last Hindú king of Bengal mentioned in Abu-l-Fazl's list, *Aín* p. 413 Bibliotheca Indica edition, is Rájá Nojah who ruled three years. This is the Rájá Noe or Noujah of Gladwin, for he has both spellings, and the Rájá Bhoja of Lassen. Abu-l-Fazl says that when Rájá Nojah died, the kingdom passed to Lakhmania the son of Rai Lachhman. He also says that Lakhmania ruled at Nadiyá and was expelled by Bakhtiyár Khiljí (*Aín*, p. 414).

In my humble opinion this Lakhmania is the Lachhman Sen of the Akbarnáma, and the prince who gave his name to the Lachhman era.

The point is, I submit, a most interesting one; for it concerns the

date of the accession of the last Hindú king of Bengal. I trust, therefore, that some one will take up the inquiry, and, if possible, reconcile Abu-l-Fazl with the almanac makers of Tirhut.

Colebrooke's date of 1104 A. D., *i. e.*, 1796—692, does not agree with the almanacs, and it would appear that Halayudha was the spiritual adviser of Lachhman, the son of Balál. In that case it seems almost certain that the date 1104 is wrong. The only thing apparently that stands in the way of the acceptance of Abu-l-Fazl's date is the Tirhut almanacs. But it seems that they do not agree with one another, and also that the compilers of them are ignorant of the origin of the era.

It strikes me as strange that the era should be permanent in Tirhut and not in other districts. Lakhmania reigned at Nadiyá, latterly at all events, and I beg to suggest that inquiry should be made among the pandits and almanac-makers of Nadiyá as to whether they know of and make use of the era.*

I have consulted Tieffenthaler, but I do not find that he throws any light on the matter. In one place he gives the months as well as the years of the Sen Rájá's reigns, and speaks of Kesava Sen as being the son of Balál Sen and the father of Mádhava. This is against the notion that Lakhmania was the grandson of Lachhman. In another place, p. 473 of the account of Bengal, Tieffenthaler gives the same list as Abu-l-Fazl, but adds that after Rájá Nodja there reigned seven Hindú princes whose names are not known, and who ruled for 106 years. But it seems that this is merely a corrupt version of Abu-l-Fazl's statement. The seven princes of Tieffenthaler are really not the unknown descendants of Rájá Nojah, but are the seven Sen kings ending with Nojah. Abu-l-Fazl's list of them shows that they reigned 106 years.

Tieffenthaler apparently did not get his information direct from Abu-l-Fazl's book, but from some later compilation.

One important point remains to be noticed.

At p. 397 of Dr. Mitra's second article on the Sena Rájás, he gives a Sanscrit inscription from Buddha Gaya, and translates it as follows :

“On Thursday the 12th of the wane, in the month of Vaiśákha Samvat or year 74 *after the expiration of the reign* of the auspicious Lakshmana Sena Deva.”

But is it not possible that the Sanscrit words mean the 74th year of the reign of Lachhman Sena? In other words that the date is a Julús or regnal era.

If so, all our difficulties seem to be at an end, for no king is recorded to have reigned eighty years except the last Sena king, *i. e.*, Lachhman.

* [The suggested enquiry is being made, and its result will subsequently be communicated. ED.]

The 74th year must, therefore, be the year of his reign, and it follows that the era originated with him. If Abu-l-Fazl is correct, and my reading of the Sanscrit inscription admissible, then the date of the inscription is $1119 + 47 = 1193$ A. D.

My knowledge of Sanscrit is exceedingly small, but it looks to me as if the words of the inscription might bear the above interpretation.

Possibly it was because it never occurred to any one that a reign could last seventy-four years, that it was taken for granted that the seventy-four years must mean years after the expiry of the reign.

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*Notes on some Kolarian tribes.—By W. H. P. DRIVER.\**

*The Asurs.*

*Habitat.*—The Asurs, a small tribe, speaking a dialect of the Kolarian language, are to be found only in the extreme west of the Lohardagá district. They are iron-smelters by profession.

*Origin and history.*—They appear to have considerable traditions in connection with their former history. The following is the story regarding their origin, and general history. In ancient times they were a great people and inhabited the Dhaulagir and Mainagir Hills on which there were two large lakes. They were clever artisans, travelled about in palkís, and used to eat red-hot iron. They did not cultivate the land, but had large herds of cattle. Then the Uráons, called Lodhás, appeared and took all their cattle, and they had to go into the jungles. (The saying with reference to the Uráons being stronger is *báro bhái Asur, terá bhái Lodhá, i. e., 'the Asurs are twelve brothers, but the Lodhás are thirteen brothers.'*) This drove them to desperation and they took to cattle-lifting and preying on the Uráons. (The mythology of the various Kolarian tribes always refers to the Asurs as robbers and fire-eaters.) These Uráons, unable to attack them in the jungles, called in the assistance of Bhag'wán, who built a great fort and invited all the Asurs to attend. Being afraid to refuse, they all came at the summons, and were told to enter the fort by Bhag'wán, who to allay their fears went in first. After they were all in, Bhag'wán shut the gate and disappeared from the top. He then filled the fort up with charcoal. When he got outside,

\* [All names, terms and words quoted in this paper are spelled by the author as he heard them from the people. The system of spelling, or transliteration, is the usual one; but it should be noted that *ñ* indicates the nasalisation of the preceding vowel, and that *õ* indicates the Eastern Gauḍian, or Bengálí, pronunciation of *a*; thus *gotõr* is the Hindí *gotar*, Skr. *gotra*; *bõr* corresponds to Hindí *bar* or *bará* 'great.' ED.]